

Heart of Nottingham Heritage Action Zone Conservation Area

Nottingham's Heritage Action Zone marks a moment of renaissance for the city's historic centre, and a new determination to harness it for the city's prosperity. Through research, listing, innovative conservation area management and grant assistance, the 'Heart of Nottingham' Heritage Action Zone will reveal the city's history and in turn secure its future conservation.

The city's economic and heritage needs are significant. In 2015, Nottingham was ranked eighth for the proportion of its wards in the top 10% of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Thirteen of its 31 conservation areas are listed in the Historic England Heritage at Risk register. On a local register compiled as part of a pilot survey of Grade II listed buildings, 81 of its listed buildings are at risk.

However ambitions for Nottingham's historic environment are higher than they have been for many years. In 2015 the city set itself the task of developing a co-ordinated approach which resulted in an award-winning Heritage Strategy. That in turn positioned the city to bid successfully for Heritage Action Zone status in 2017.

Building on recommendations from Historic England's Urban Panel, which visited the city in 2012, the Heritage Strategy now serves to underpin and co-ordinate a wide range of projects, including a Townscape Heritage scheme, and major investment in Nottingham Castle, both grant-aided by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and City Council. The recent refurbishment of the Grade II* listed railway station building has won design awards, and has had a transformative effect on the southern gateway to the city.

As a Heritage Action Zone numerous other priorities in the Heritage Strategy can now be tackled. Among the main concerns are the condition of historic buildings and frontages, and perceptions the environment has become uncared for and unsafe. The programme will establish partnership schemes to reinstate historic details and address deterioration and vacancy in three of the most significant conservation areas: Old Market Square, the Lace Market and Sneinton Market.

Old Market Square has been the heart of the city for a millennium. In addition to the partnership scheme, the square will be given a Historic Area Assessment. The findings will be published in a book in Historic England's *Informed Conservation* series, and an associated exhibition. The Square will also be used as a test-bed to explore new funding mechanisms for repairs to historic buildings. Bromley House, a Georgian subscription library which overlooks the Square, is planning vital roof repairs with a Historic England grant.



Old Market Square in the 1740s. No Copyright

Also receiving partnership funding are Sneinton Market, a former wholesale market complex, which is being regenerated to provide a unique environment for enterprise in the city's Cultural Quarter, and the nearby Lace Market. In the 1990s the Lace Market saw pioneering efforts at heritage-led regeneration. However much remains to be done, and the programme will fund an appraisal of future uses for large historic buildings in the area. It will also complement other HLF projects, such as the refurbishment of the Galleries of Justice to become the National Justice Museum and ambitions for the People's Hall. Since 1994, this brings HLF grants in Nottingham to £57million, which is more than to any other part of the East Midlands and reflects both the extent of the city's heritage, as well as the size of the job to be done.

A little known feature of Nottingham is its man-made caves, which date from the Saxon period to the 20th century. 550 caves were identified in recent research, and a new technical guide will enable owners to conserve them. A shortlist will be reviewed for potential listing, and local people will be able to learn about and discover some for themselves.

To deliver the programme, Nottingham City Council will receive £1.6 million over five years from Historic England to be matched by £1 million public and private capital and a further £902,000 in associated projects and in kind contributions from the City Council. This makes Nottingham the most ambitious of the ten Heritage Action Zones approved in Round 1.

A wide range of partners in the city are playing their part, including Nottingham Civic Society and Creative Quarter Ltd. And local people are already getting involved. A Heritage Partnership and an annual heritage conference have been established, to be followed shortly by a new Building Preservation Trust. An Urban Room near the railway station will offer a space where citizens can share in and contribute to the city's development. The City Council will refresh and re-launch the local list, with the Civic Society as lead delivery partner. From this, Historic England will consider a selection for national listing. Finally teacher training project from Heritage Schools will bring the city's heritage to the next generation.



Old Market Square, Nottingham, where unsympathetic shopfronts will be replaced and the Georgian colonnade will be revealed as part of the Heritage Action Zone. © Historic England

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